



CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

INTRODUCTION

With its 2025 LRTP Update complete, the MPO now must shift its focus towards next steps and implementation activities to carry the Plan forward. In a traditional planning process, the MPO would begin by focusing on implementing the Plan's project and strategy/policy priorities. While this course of action is applicable and one the MPO is undertaking, the nature of this Plan update provides a context for specific follow-up activities.

As discussed in Chapter One, while this 2025 LRTP Update represents a comprehensive Plan update that fully complies with all applicable federal and state requirements, it is also intended to provide a foundation for more detailed and tailored follow-up analysis that was constrained by the adoption schedule, LRTP Update budget, and several other factors affecting the 2025 Update noted previously beyond the MPO's control. In particular, follow-up work supporting the 2025 LRTP, likely as an LRTP Amendment, is anticipated to address several factors relating to analysis tools/methods, specific subarea planning issues, potential funding changes, and other factors. These are discussed in detail below.

CENTRAL FLORIDA REGIONAL PLANNING MODEL (CFRPM) REFINEMENTS

As discussed in Chapter Two, the Brevard MPO coordinated extensively with FDOT-District Five and the other MPOs in the District to develop and begin using the CFRPM for the MPO's 2025 LRTP. However, as noted in that discussion, several technical and performance issues arose with the CFRPM that, due to schedule and timing conflicts, could not be sufficiently resolved prior to the MPO's required LRTP adoption date.

Accordingly, one of the first post-LRTP tasks the MPO is undertaking involves continuing to work with FDOT to further technically assess the structure, inputs, assumptions, and performance of the CFRPM to generate accurate 2025 travel forecasts in Brevard County that can be confidently used as an analytical transportation planning tool. As of this writing, FDOT and its modeling consultant are attempting to address many of the technical issues and concerns previously raised by Brevard MPO staff prior to the final release of the official 2025 CFRPM subsequent to adoption and documentation of the 2025 LRTP. However, it is anticipated that additional follow-up work will be needed to further refine the accuracy and responsiveness of the regional model to Brevard County. Resolving the status of the CFRPM is the highest post-LRTP priority of MPO staff so that it can be used in preparing the LRTP Amendment and other planning activities by the MPO and its member local governments.

Brevard MPO and FDOT-District Five staff are also coordinating with staff from the Indian River MPO to the south and that MPO's FDOT District (Four) regarding modeling issues and traffic forecasts. This is because Brevard County forms the southern border of the CFRPM network while Indian River County forms the northern border of the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Model (TCRPM) network. With four major roadway connections between the two counties (Babcock Street, Interstate 95, US 1, and SR A1A) and rapid growth near the county line – Palm Bay, Barefoot Bay, Micco, and Grant in Brevard



County and Sebastian, Fellsmere, and Roseland in Indian River County – intercounty travel patterns are an important concern for both MPOs.

SOCIO-CULTURAL EFFECTS (SCE) ANALYSIS

Another important area of additional post-LRTP coordination with FDOT will involve that agency’s SCE and Efficient Transportation Decision-Making (ETDM) initiative. As noted in Chapter Two, the SCE/ETDM process is intended to streamline the implementation of LRTP cost-feasible projects by generally assessing a project’s viability up-front to detect any “fatal flaws.” This screening is intended to eliminate the commitment of substantial funding, time, and resources to more detailed design and engineering studies for a project that may ultimately prove unfeasible.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the MPO worked cooperatively with FDOT-District Five to develop and “test” the SCE/ETDM process on projects from the MPO’s 2020 LRTP as the 2025 LRTP Update process was being initiated. However, due to many of the same timing and scheduling conflicts affecting use of the CFRPM, the SCE/ETDM process was not ready for implementation by FDOT prior to the MPO’s adoption of the 2025 LRTP. The Brevard MPO is very interested in how best to develop and structure the SCE/ETDM process and any tool that will help facilitate the project priority implementation process. As with a refined CFRPM, the MPO is interested in using a refined SCE/ETDM process as part of subsequent LRTP planning efforts.

SAFETEA-LU COMPLIANCE

As discussed in Chapter One, although SAFETEA-LU became law prior to the MPO adopting the 2025 LRTP, the Plan Update was begun under and must only adhere to the provisions of TEA-21. Even so, the Brevard MPO is already performing several of the new SAFETEA-LU activities and addressing many of the new law’s metropolitan planning requirements. For example, the MPO already coordinates with agencies involved in other types of planning as well as promoting consistency with local land use and growth objectives, a key component of Florida’s recently-revised Growth Management Act. Additionally, the MPO’s ongoing public involvement process, and particularly as applied to the 2025 LRTP, already meets SAFETEA-LU’s requirements for the convenience of meetings, use of visualization techniques, Internet posting, and other requirements.

Though the MPO already meets many of the new law’s requirements, because this 2025 LRTP was prepared under the provisions of TEA-21, an amendment will be needed to formalize the Plan’s adherence to SAFETEA-LU. According to a February 9th, 2006 memo from FDOT-Central Office to all District MPO liaisons (relying on guidance provided by FHWA on December 8th, 2005), the LRTP for each MPO (including Brevard) must be in full compliance with SAFETEA-LU by July 1st, 2007. Accordingly, the Plan will need to be amended prior to that date.

SECTOR PLANNING ANALYSIS

The MPO recognizes that Brevard County includes several distinct areas or sectors, each with unique planning challenges and opportunities that are difficult to completely address with the broad-brush of a countywide LRTP Update process. Put another way, certain “hot spot” areas of the County would



benefit from a long range planning process customized to address localized planning issues, particularly rapid growth and urbanization. In fact, the primary impetus for the MPO to consider amending the 2025 LRTP is to comprehensively address certain issues in these “hot spots” as follows:

- **South County:** The primary issues here include intercounty travel to/from Indian River County as discussed above as well as the potential location and impacts from an Interstate 95 interchange with the Palm Bay Parkway in rural but fast-growing areas to the east and south of the City of Palm Bay.
- **Palm Bay:** With thousands of vacant platted lots (developable lots) within the City and new development at the City’s borders, the continuation of rapid growth within Palm Bay will have substantial long-term transportation and mobility impacts in southern Brevard County.
- **Central Brevard County:** Rapid growth is also a major concern in this part of the County as the Viera development begins achieving critical mass, the Port St. John area continues to build out, and the proposed Brevard Crossings project potentially adds a third regional shopping mall to the County’s retail landscape. This area is also critically important because it represents an “infill” growth pattern of sorts in the development of lands along the I-95 corridor between the established urban areas of Melbourne and West Melbourne to the south and Cocoa, Rockledge, and Titusville to the north. Additionally, Wickham Road, providing a critical link between Interstate 95 in Viera and Melbourne, is perhaps the most congested roadway in the County in terms of pressures and impacts from growth and new development.
- **South Titusville:** The Titusville area has historically been slower growing (and even declining in some areas) than the rest of the County because of the very cyclical and unbalanced nature of the local economy. However, within the past five years, the South Titusville area has begun to see a substantial amount of growth (both residential and non-residential) that is in stark contrast to historical patterns. This is likely due to several factors, such as general pent-up demand; proximity to Orlando International Airport, the University of Central Florida, and other employment centers in east Orange County; and the availability of affordable housing relative to adjacent areas. As in Palm Bay, unanticipated growth in this area could have substantial transportation and mobility impacts within Brevard County.

While the sectors and issues highlighted above are some of the most pressing to currently confront the MPO, it should be noted that there are many other important sectors and issues throughout Brevard County that would be appropriate to address through the 2025 LRTP Amendment process.

SCENARIO PLANNING INITIATIVE

The MPO also recognizes the increasing emphasis and value placed on the scenario planning approach by FHWA in the MPO long range transportation planning process. While the exact nature of additional LRTP analysis is a policy decision to be made by the MPO in collaboration with its stakeholder local governments, the MPO is interested in investigating the application of a scenario planning process to Brevard. In fact, as noted in Chapters One and Two, the MPO even initiated a scenario planning analysis as part of this 2025 LRTP before funding, schedule, and other constraints dictated a different approach.



Given the unique issues, challenges, and opportunities inherent to distinct areas of the County as well as macro-level trends and conditions affecting Brevard County (such as the unpredictable nature of the Space industry), the scenario planning process may have significant value as a planning approach for the MPO.

TRANSPORTATION REVENUE CHANGES

Perhaps the greatest challenge and constraint facing the Brevard MPO in its ongoing transportation planning process is the substantial shortfall in transportation revenues needed to implement its identified project priorities. An LRTP planning process often identifies numerous transportation “needs” – 30 to 50 distinct projects in an area the size of the Brevard MPO is common – but only enough transportation revenues to fully fund a small fraction of those projects. Emphasizing other modes and strategies (such as land use or congestion management) can provide measurable value in closing that gap but does not completely mitigate this dynamic situation faced by the Brevard MPO and most other MPOs at some point.

Given this reality, the potential for significant additional transportation revenues can have a major impact on the long range transportation planning process. As applied to the Brevard MPO, the County is currently considering placing a sales tax increase on the November 2006 ballot, the passage of which could provide a significant additional revenue source for transportation project priorities. Accordingly, this is another important post-2025 LRTP adoption issue to be addressed through an LRTP Amendment.

Another important transportation revenue issue to be addressed is the impact of FDOT’s Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) funding policies on the total revenue stream available to Brevard to fund LRTP priorities. The 2025 LRTP Update occurred as FDOT transitioned from the Florida Intrastate Highway System (FIHS) to the SIS. Accompanying revenue projections incorporating this transition were not available from FDOT in time to be considered as part of the 2025 LRTP Update. However, funding formula policies and impacts are significantly different between the FIHS and SIS. Similarly, FDOT’s FIHS-only revenue projections provided to the MPO for use in the 2025 LRTP were unable to account for the recent passage of SAFETEA-LU and accompanying revenue implications for the MPO. Accordingly, it is important to incorporate these changing conditions in the MPO’s LRTP.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Finally, one of the issues of continuing importance to the MPO is the policy concern of strategic planning. More specifically, the MPO is interested in exploring how an effective strategic planning process can facilitate the implementation of the MPO’s transportation project and planning priorities. An example of this concept was the formation of the MPO’s Traffic Operations Subcommittee as recommended in its 2020 LRTP as a forum for advancing traffic flow, operations, and ITS projects that could delay or eliminate the need for more costly capacity investments. Similarly, one of the input factors prompting the MPO to conduct the random-sample telephone survey for this LRTP was to gain insight on general community transportation preferences and priorities as a means to implement a larger-scale organizational strategic planning initiative for the MPO. Additionally, the MPO anticipates initiating (in March 2006) a Continuation of Operations Plan (COOP) as required by FHWA that may also provide



insights on organizational structure and operations as a tool for enhancing implementation of the MPO's project priorities and strategies.

CONCLUSION

Because of several scheduling constraints and changing conditions beyond the Brevard MPO's control as it prepared the 2025 LRTP, the MPO faces a unique context of next steps as it works to implement the new LRTP. As the MPO moves forward, this chapter provides a framework for understanding the major technical, policy, and other issues currently facing the MPO as it considers amending its 2025 LRTP. While the decision to amend the LRTP and the nature of such an amendment is at the discretion of the MPO, the issues, challenges, and opportunities discussed here provide a potential course of action for the MPO as it advances its transportation planning and implementation process beyond the 2025 LRTP.